



Montgomery County Council

From the Office of Council Vice President Valerie Ervin Nov. 22, 2010

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Bill Proposed by Council Vice President Ervin Would Emphasize Montgomery's Fiscal Picture During Labor Arbitration

ROCKVILLE, Md., November 22, 2010—Montgomery County Council Vice President Valerie Ervin, who represents Kensington, Takoma Park, Silver Spring and Wheaton, will introduce a bill on Tuesday, Nov. 23, to require an arbitrator to place the highest priority on the County's ability to afford labor contracts before evaluating other factors traditionally used in arbitration decisions. Expedited Bill 57-10 is co-sponsored by all members of the Council.

There are three separate laws that govern the County's collective bargaining with the unions representing police, firefighters and general government employees. All resolve an impasse through arbitration where the arbitrator selects the entire final offer submitted by either the County or the union.

Under current law, the arbitrator makes an award after considering six factors. These include: past contracts and bargaining history; the wages, hours, benefits, and conditions of employment of other County employees, public employees in the region and the State, and the County's private sector; and the County's ability to pay for any changes. Current County law gives none of these factors greater weight than any other.

"The Fiscal Year 2011 budget the Council approved in May, and the six-year balanced fiscal plan the Council approved in June, are stark reminders of the severe short-term and long-term budget pressures the County faces," said Council Vice President Ervin. "An arbitrator's assessment of final competing offers should be grounded in this reality."

(MORE)

The proposed bill would require an arbitrator to give the highest priority to the County's ability to pay. It would also require the arbitrator to evaluate other factors such as the interest and welfare of County taxpayers and service recipients.

"As one with more than a quarter century on the front lines of the labor movement, I am deeply committed to fairness for County employees," said Council Vice President Ervin. "But fairness also requires that the County can afford to honor its labor contracts. It also requires equitable treatment for taxpayers and service recipients. This bill will help achieve these goals while protecting fundamental bargaining procedures."

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